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Student Voices: It gets better

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At 14 years old, I was watching my mother cough blood almost every single day. She was diagnosed with a pulmonary embolism. (Blood clots in the lungs). My summer of 2014 was mostly spent coming and going to the hospital. I started my third year of high school on the wrong path, I went into hanging around with people who weren't bringing me anywhere in life, leading me to smoke cigarettes and weed, which affected my life as a track and field athlete (hurdler). I did not act like I paid attention in any of my classes, I was a terrible student. On December 15th 2014, I was jumped by a group of random people in ski masks, who wanted to rob me of my phone and wallet. A month after getting attacked by 5 vigilantes, I was suffering from the symptoms of PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). Battling insomnia and fear every day, I turned to alcohol to deal with the mental pain. As a troubled student, I caused a lot of trouble within the walls of my high school, including vandalism. Getting suspended 3 times in 2 weeks, almost getting expelled. The vice-

principal (at the time), told me to buck up on my grades, or else I was going to repeat secondary 3. In mid-march everything was working out for me. I wasn't battling much adversity, I was starting to get my life back in control. A phone call, changed that. Saying that my 11 month old baby cousin passed away. And he meant a lot to me, his passing affected me tragically. Feeling as if life was playing this cruel joke on me, feeling as if my life was never going to get better, I jumped in front of a bus to end my life. One night, I could not sleep, due to the battle of insomnia. At 3:30 in the morning, unable to fall asleep, I decided to actually look at my report card, and I was disgusted with myself. 3:30 in the morning, I pick up my math copybook and I start studying. Having school in a couple of hours I decided to look over polynomials. By the end of the term, my marks had increased by over 50%. Example; math term 1: 31. Term 2: 40. Term 3: 86! Going from the lowest mark of the class, to one of the highest marks in the entire section. Unfortunately, due to the average, I had failed secondary 3. Failing a year of school sucks, because you slowly drift away from your friends, and I was learning over every single thing I had already mastered. I had this mindset that was completely set up for success, I understood what it was like to work hard, but because of repeating another year of school, I was going through this depression for the first couple of months of the new school year.

But then, I started to think. Maybe I failed for a reason. Maybe everything that happened to me, happened for a reason. Maybe I can't see it now, but eventually, I will. I passed that year with flying colors, I am passing now, aiming to graduate with honors, and I got accepted into Vanier college. My mother is recovering after 2 years of having surgery, she no longer coughs blood, and is able to breathe properly. And then I started to speak. Using my story, and experiences to help other teenagers who are battling adversity, or traumatic experiences, I use my story and my words to help change their lives. I have already saved so many people from attempting to commit suicide, helped dozens of people pass academically, and helped dozens of athletes mentally, all through words. It gets better.

My name is Adam Aktas, I am 17 years old, a track athlete, graduating from Lester B. Pearson High School with honours, a Vice-president of our Student Council and I am an aspiring motivational speaker.